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# ***-FACTOR***



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WHEN SUPERHUMANITY NEEDS A DETECTIVE AGENCY, THEY CALL UPON MADROX THE  
MULTIPLE MAN AND HIS MUTANT TEAM OF INVESTIGATORS...

# X-FACTOR



## PREVIOUSLY...

X-FACTOR, THE WORLD'S ONLY MUTANT DETECTIVE AGENCY, HAS  
RETURNED FROM LAS VEGAS AND IS READY FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL.  
WHICH, IF YOU KNOW X-FACTOR, IS GOING TO BE ANYTHING BUT USUAL.

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A close-up comic book panel of a man's face, tilted back. His eyes are closed, and his mouth is wide open in a scream or shout, revealing his teeth. His face is covered in blood, with a prominent vertical streak running down the right side of his forehead. A hand with dark skin and a red, pointed fingernail is positioned near his mouth, as if about to bite or having just bitten. The background is dark and textured.

EVERYBODY IN  
MY CREW, ALL  
THE PEOPLE I  
COULD HAVE HAD  
BACKING ME UP...

BUT I TOLD THEM,  
"NAH, DON'T WORRY.  
I DON'T NEED THE  
WHOLE TEAM. TAKE  
THE DAY OFF."

IT SEEMED SO  
STRAIGHTFORWARD,  
SO OPEN AND SHUT.

NOW THE ONLY THING  
THAT MAY WIND UP  
OPEN AND SHUT IS THE  
LID ON MY COFFIN.

# STAKE OUT





SURE DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THAT WHEN I FIRST CAME TO ADINA MALCOLM'S HOME.

OR, MORE CORRECTLY, HER SOON-TO-BE-FORMER HOME.



LOOK AT THIS! SHE'S GIVING ME UNTIL TOMORROW TO MOVE OUT! AND NO ONE IS DOING ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

WELL, TECHNICALLY, IT IS HER HOUSE.



ARE YOU TAKING HER SIDE?

IT'S MY JOB TO TAKE YOUR SIDE.



OKAY, SEE, THIS IS WHY I WAS HOPING MONET ST. CROIX WOULD BE HANDLING THIS PERSONALLY.

I WANT SOMEONE WHO'S TAKING MY SIDE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE A GREAT INJUSTICE IS HAPPENING, NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE BEING PAID FOR IT.



MONET'S IN BEVERLY HILLS AT THE MOMENT...

WHAT'S SHE DOING THERE?

BUYING IT, THE POINT IS--



ADINA... MAY I CALL YOU ADINA...?

I SUPPOSE, YOU ARE...?

WHAT THE HELL IS SHE DOING HERE? ALTHOUGH I GUESS NOTHING SHOULD SURPRISE ME WHERE SHE'S CONCERNED.



LAYLA MILLER.  
I'M MR. MADROX'S  
ASSOCIATE.

MY  
CONDOLENCES  
ON THE LOSS OF  
YOUR FATHER.



THANK YOU,  
LAYLA.

ARE YOU  
IN CHARGE OF  
X-FACTOR  
INVESTIGATIONS?

NO--

YES,  
I AM.



AND I ASSURE  
YOU THAT YOU WILL  
RECEIVE OUR FULL  
SUPPORT.

ALL...ALL  
RIGHT. THANK  
YOU--



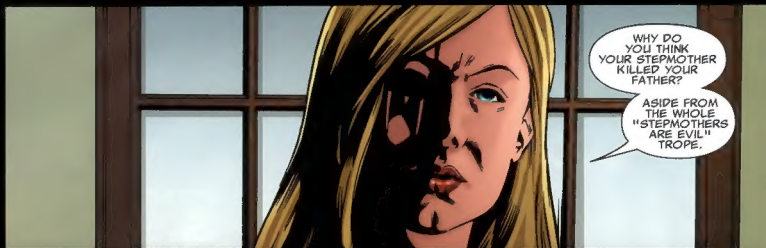
YOU HAVEN'T  
BEEN SLEEPING  
WELL, HAVE  
YOU?

THAT OBVIOUS.  
HMP? YEAH, I'VE BEEN  
HAVING NIGHTMARES,  
KEEPING ME AWAKE.  
GUESS A DETECTIVE  
JUST KNOWS  
STUFF.

YOU  
COULD SAY  
THAT.

GOD KNOWS  
SHE CERTAINLY  
HAS ENOUGH  
TIMES.

SO...



WHY DO  
YOU THINK  
YOUR STEPMOTHER  
KILLED YOUR  
FATHER?

ASIDE FROM  
THE WHOLE  
"STEMOTHERS  
ARE EVIL"  
TROPE.



SHE'S ALWAYS HATED ME, THAT'S WHY.

SHE THINKS I ONLY CARED ABOUT HER FATHER FOR HIS MONEY.



WITH ALL RESPECT, YOU ARE CONSIDERABLY YOUNGER THAN HE WAS.

THAT'S HARDLY A CRIME.

TRUE, BUT MURDERING SOMEONE IS.



AND THE POLICE ALREADY RULED ON WHO THE MURDERER WAS:

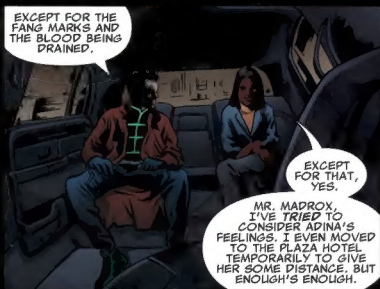
A VAMPIRE, DURING THAT ENTIRE BUSINESS WHEN THOSE... THOSE CREATURES WERE JUST EVERYWHERE.

I CHECKED UP ON YOU, AND I ASSUME IT'S THAT SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT THAT PROMPTED ADINA TO SEEK OUT YOUR SERVICES.



MY HUSBAND WAS A GOOD MAN. I LOVED HIM PEARLY.

BUT HE WAS IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME. IT WAS NO DIFFERENT THAN A RANDOM MUGGING...



EXCEPT FOR THE FANG MARKS AND THE BLOOD BEING DRAINED.

EXCEPT FOR THAT, YES.

MR. MADROX, I'VE TRIED TO CONSIDER ADINA'S FEELINGS. I EVEN MOVED TO THE PLAZA HOTEL TEMPORARILY TO GIVE HER SOME DISTANCE, BUT ENOUGH'S ENOUGH.



MY FATHER BROUGHT MOM  
AND ME HERE FROM ETHIOPIA  
WHEN I WAS A CHILD. HE  
WANTED TO MAKE A  
BETTER LIFE  
FOR US.

AND THEN  
YOUR MOTHER  
DIED WHEN YOU  
WERE FIVE.

YES.  
IT WAS JUST  
US AFTER THAT.  
AND HE WORKED  
HARD. BECAME  
SUCCESSFUL...

AND THEN  
CARLA CAME  
ALONG.

THIS "VAMPIRE  
ATTACK"...IT'S SO  
APPROPRIATE  
BECAUSE SHE'S  
NOTHING BUT A  
BLOODSUCKER.

I CONFRONTED  
HER, YOU KNOW.  
AT THE FUNERAL.  
HER WITH HER  
CROCODILE  
TEARS...

I TOLD HER  
I KNEW SHE WAS  
RESPONSIBLE  
SOMEHOW.

IT'S JUST...  
IT'S TOO  
CONVENIENT.

YOU MEAN  
THAT THEY WERE  
MARRIED LESS  
THAN A YEAR, THEN  
HE DIES AND SHE  
INHERITS--

EVERYTHING!

EXCEPT  
SHE'S LETTING  
YOU KEEP THE  
CONDO ON THE  
WEST SIDE.

WOULD  
YOU EXPLAIN  
TO HIM  
THAT--

THAT HER  
"LETTING" YOU  
KEEP SOMETHING  
THAT SHOULD  
RIGHTFULLY HAVE  
BEEN YOURS IS  
INSULTING?

EXACTLY.

WHAT  
SHE SAID.

"SHE"?  
YOU SAID  
IT.

SHE'S THE  
CLIENT. WE  
SPEAK FOR  
HER.



IN EXCHANGE  
FOR MY TALKING  
TO YOU SO FREELY,  
MR. MADROX, I'D  
APPRECIATE IF YOU  
WOULD DO ME  
A FAVOR IN  
RESPONSE...

IF I  
CAN.



I KNOW  
ADINA SEES  
ME AS AN  
OUTSIDER.

SOMEONE  
WHO DIDN'T  
SHARE HER AND  
HER FATHER'S  
ROOTS.

AND  
THERE'S  
SOME TRUTH  
TO THAT.



BUT  
I'M NOT THE  
ENEMY.

SHE HAS  
NO REASON  
TO RESENT  
ME...



AND I THINK,  
DEEP DOWN, SHE  
UNDERSTANDS  
THAT.

WOULD  
YOU TELL  
HER ALL THAT  
FOR ME?

IF SHE'LL  
LISTEN.

MAKE HER  
LISTEN.

I BELIEVE  
THIS IS YOUR  
STOP.







HOW'D IT GO?

ABOUT AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED.

YOU'LL KNOW ALL ABOUT IT ONCE YOU ABSORB ME.

FINALLY... A DUPE WHO'S RELATIVELY NORMAL. NICE CHANGE OF PACE--



AND YOU, YOU RAVISHING THING...

SPOKE TOO SOON.

I CAN'T KEEP MY HANDS OFF YOU ANYMORE.

THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE.



MARRY ME.



OKEY-POKE.



WHOA!!!!

OOOFF!



REGISTER US AT THE ARM STORE!

CALL ME!



SORRY ABOUT THAT.

YOU COULD HAVE TIMED THE ABSORPTION A BIT BETTER.



UNLESS, OF COURSE YOU MEANT TO TIME IT THAT WAY.

YOU MEAN DELIBERATELY PROP YOU ON YOUR BLITT?

AND AFTER THAT ROMANTIC PROPOSAL, TOO.



THAT WASN'T A REAL PROPOSAL!

FELT REAL.



I WAS OUT OF MY MIND. LITERALLY.



YOUR DUPES ALL REPRESENT PIECES OF YOUR PERSONALITY.

WHICH MEANS IT WAS ON YOUR MIND.

WOULD IT BE GALLICHE TO ASK TERRY TO BE MY MAID OF HONOR?

LAYLA--!



III'M GETTING MARRRIED...

GIVE ME STRENGTH.



THEN AGAIN, I NEVER KNOW WHAT LAYLA'S DEAL IS, OR WHERE SHE'S COMING FROM.

THE ENTIRE TRIP OVER TO THE MORGUE, SHE KEEPS TALKING ABOUT BEING MY FIANCEE. SHE DOESN'T MEAN IT, THOUGH.

I THINK SHE DOESN'T MEAN IT.



THERE'S NO QUESTION, JAMIE. IT WAS DEFINITELY A VAMPIRE ATTACK.

FANG MARKS, BLOOD DRAINED...

SURE IT WAS VAMPIRE FANGS, ARTIE?

WHAT ELSE? NO SALIVA AROUND THE PUNCTURES.

WHAT ABOUT DEAD TISSUE? ANY OF IT ON THE VICTIM?



NONE, ACTUALLY, WHICH ADMITTEDLY IS STRANGE.

YOU'D THINK THERE'D BE SOME UNDER THE VIC'S FINGERNAILS OR SOMETHING, BUT NOTHING.



WHICH WOULD SEEM TO ARGUE AGAINST THERE BEING ANY HUMANS INVOLVED.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO A RANDOM VAMPIRE ATTACK.

MAYBE.

"MAYBE"?

UH-HUH.


"MAYBE"?

YUP.

YOU'RE KILLIN' ME, LAYLA.

WELL, WE'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR IT.

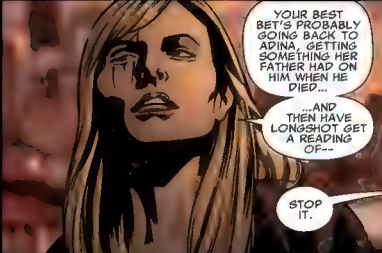




SHE'S STARTING TO GET TO ME. I MEAN, WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD, SHE WAS ENIGMATIC, AND IT WAS CUTE.

BUT NOW SHE'S ALL GROWN UP...

...AND THE CHARM IS FADING.



YOUR BEST BET'S PROBABLY GOING BACK TO ADINA, GETTING SOMETHING HER FATHER HAD ON HIM WHEN HE DIED...

...AND THEN HAVE LONGSHOT GET A READING OF--

STOP IT.



EXCUSE ME?



JUST TELL ME HOW THIS ENDS

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE--

YEAH, YOU DO. YOU KNOW WHAT THE DEAL IS WITH MALCOLM, DON'T YOU.

HELL YOU PROBABLY KNOW ABOUT THIS WHOLE CONVERSATION!

JAMIE, YOU'RE BEING--

I'M BEING WHAT? JERKED AROUND?



YOU'RE HURTING ME!

AND HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE YOU HURTING, PLAYING GAMES INSTEAD OF JUST BEING STRAIGHT WITH US!



PLAYING GAMES IS FINE WHEN YOU'RE A KID!

BUT YOU'RE NOT A KID ANYMORE, AND PLAYTIME'S OVER!





"ON STAKEOUT.  
IT'S WHAT  
DETECTIVES DO."

SHOULD I  
ASK YOU WHY  
WE'RE SPYING  
ON OUR CLIENT?

I'D  
RATHER YOU  
DIDN'T.

IT'S  
JUST...

JUST  
WHAT?

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE  
THAT YOU KEEP ME IN THE  
DARK HALF THE TIME  
JUST BECAUSE OF SOME  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
POINT.

EVERYTHING  
PEOPLE DO IS  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
POINTS, WHETHER  
THEY ADMIT IT  
OR NOT.

YOU USED  
TO TRUST ME.  
NOW YOU SOUND  
LIKE MONET AND  
RICKTOR.

CAN YOU BLAME ME?  
YOU HUNG OUT WITH  
DOCTOR DOOM, FOR  
GOD'S SAKE.  
WHY--?

BECAUSE HE  
HAS KNOWLEDGE  
ABOUT MYSTICISM  
I'M GOING TO  
NEED.

I'M SURPRISED  
YOU DON'T KNOW  
IT ALREADY.

I DIDN'T,  
BUT I'M  
GOING TO.

EVEN  
WHEN YOU  
ANSWER ME, I  
DON'T KNOW WHAT  
YOU'RE TALKING  
ABOUT.



FOR SOMEONE WHO WAS HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING, SHE'S SLEEPING PRETTY SOUNDLY NOW.

YEAH, WHAT?

JAMIE...?



WHEN YOUR DUPE PROPOSED TO ME...

THAT WASN'T--

REAL, I KNOW. IT'S JUST... WHEN HE DID...

...IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN OVER A YEAR THAT I WAS...



...HAPPY.



LAYLA...

LOOK...

IT'S JUST... I WANT TO TRUST YOU--

I SAID LOOK.


I...I DON'T...?

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS. LOOK.

DO I NEED TO SING IT FOR YOU?

WHAT THE HELL--?





SOME SORT OF... FOG  
OR SOMETHING, BUT  
MORE SUBSTANTIAL...

...HOVERING  
OVER HER...

NO... COMING  
OUT OF HER...  
WHAT... I DON'T...



OH MY  
GOD.



WHAT THE  
HELL--?

SHE'S  
CLIMBING  
UP TO THE  
ROOF!

YOU  
SAID THAT  
ALREADY.  
START THE  
CAR.

YES, I  
SEE. START  
THE CAR.

WHERE  
IS SHE  
GO--?



HONEY?  
START THE  
DAMNED CAR,  
WOULD YOU,  
PLEASE?

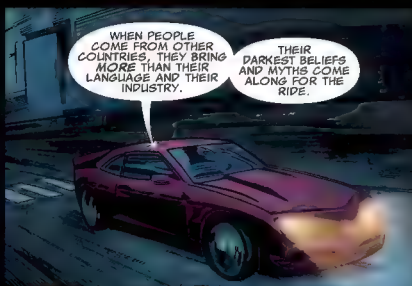
OWI OWI  
OKAY!



I DRIVE AS FAST AS I CAN, FOLLOWING APINA. FORTUNATELY IT'S THREE IN THE MORNING; THE STREETS ARE RELATIVELY EMPTY.

BUT I DON'T GET IT. I SAW HER IN DAYLIGHT. SHE'S NO VAMPIRE. SO WHAT AM I SEEING NOW?

AND AS IF READING MY MIND—WHICH, FOR ALL I KNOW, SHE IS—LAYLA ANSWERS...



WHEN PEOPLE COME FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, THEY BRING MORE THAN THEIR LANGUAGE AND THEIR INDUSTRY.

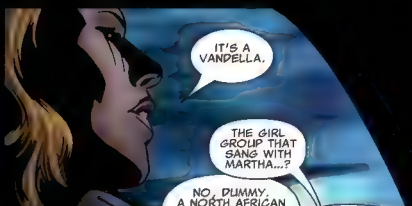
THEIR DARKEST BELIEFS AND MYTHS COME ALONG FOR THE RIDE.



I...I DON'T...

APINA'S FROM ETHIOPIA. HER DREAMS WERE HAUNTED. HER FATHER DIED OF A VAMPIRE BITE.

STILL NOT GETTING IT.



IT'S A VANDELLA.

THE GIRL GROUP THAT SANG WITH MARTHA...?

NO DUMMY. A NORTH AFRICAN DREAM STALKER. A VAMPIRIC DEMON SPIRIT, LIKE A SUCCUBUS.

AND IT'S...WHAT? POSSESSING HER?



YEAH. I'M BETTING APINA HAS NO IDEA OF WHAT'S GOING ON.

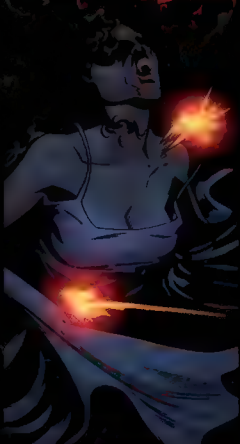
AND AS LONG AS THE VANDELLA IS AT THE HELM AND APINA STAYS ASLEEP...

"...SHE'S BASICALLY  
LINKILLABLE."





NYARRRRHHH!!!  
BLAM



BACK TO HELL, LADY!  
YOU MAY BE  
FOGGY, BUT PARTS  
OF YOU ARE SOLID  
ENOUGH!

BLAM



GOOD THING I CAN  
STAKE OUT MORE THAN  
ONE PLACE AT A TIME.

THE MOMENT WE  
STARTED TRAILING  
ADINA HARKNESS  
UP THERE...

I CALLED THE DUPE  
THAT I HAD WATCHING  
CARLA AND TOLD HIM  
TO GET HIS BUTT UP  
TO HER ROOM.



HE'S GOT A SLIGHTLY  
DIRTY HARRY EDGE  
TO HIM, SO HE WAS THE  
RIGHT DUPE FOR THE JOB.

WAS THAT  
THE...THE THING  
THAT KILLED MY  
HUSBAND...?

IT...IT  
LOOKED  
LIKE...SOUNDED  
LIKE...

SHAPE-SHIFTER.  
WASN'T ADINA AT  
ALL...JUST TRYING  
TO CONFUSE YOU.



UNFFFFF!



ADINA!  
WAKE UP!



WHEN YOU'RE  
INVESTIGATING  
VAMPIRES, YOU  
KEEP A CROSS  
AND STAKE IN  
THE TRUNK OF  
YOUR CAR.  
FORTUNATELY,  
ADINA'S BODY  
ALREADY HEALED  
FROM THE BULLETS.

LAYLA'S IN THE CAR.  
MAKING CALLS TO  
THE REST OF THE  
TEAM, WAKING THEM  
UP, TELLING THEM  
TO GET OVER HERE.



BUT I FIGURE IF WE  
CAN KEEP HER  
BUTTONED UP UNTIL  
DAYLIGHT, ADINA  
WILL AWAKEN AND--



DO I LOOK  
LIKE SOMEONE  
WHO IS THREATENED  
BY THE CHRISTIAN  
GOD?

SO MUCH  
FOR THAT  
PLAN.



IDIOT!  
YOU UNDERSTAND  
NOTHING!

ARRRRHHH!



I...I  
UNDERSTAND  
YOU'VE GOT  
SOME SERIOUS  
DADDY  
ISSUES...

HE INSULTED  
THE MEMORY OF  
HER MOTHER! HE  
INSULTED THE  
MEMORY OF WHO  
WE ARE!

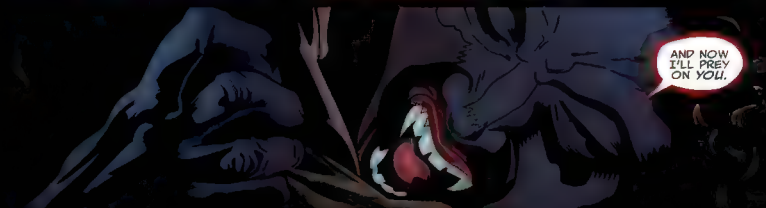
SHE  
WANTED HIM  
TO PAY, AND I  
HELPED--!



SHE LOVED  
HIM! SHE DIDN'T  
WANT HIM TO DIE,  
MUCH LESS...  
HAVE ANY HAND  
IN IT!

THIS IS ALL  
ABOUT YOU,  
YOU...PARASITE!  
YOU JUST...EXIST  
TO KILL...AND  
LOOK FOR WAYS  
TO DO IT...!

YOU DIDN'T  
HELP HER!  
YOU PREYED  
ON HER!



AND NOW  
I'LL PREY  
ON YOU.



AND THAT'S  
WHEN I HEAR  
THE WORDS.



IT'S LAYLA, MUTTERING  
THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND.  
IT'S SOME SORT OF...I DON'T  
KNOW...INCANTATION.


SHE'S NOT THROWING BOLTS  
OF MYSTIC ENERGY AROUND LIKE  
DOC STRANGE OR ANYTHING...

...BUT WHATEVER  
SHE'S SAYING...



IT APPEARS  
TO BE  
WORKING.






I CAN BARELY MAKE IT OUT. I HAVE A GLIMPSE OF THE CREATURE IN ITS PUREST FORM, SOMETHING ONLY HINTED AT WHEN IT WAS POSSESSING ADINA...

AND THEN THE AIR ERUPTS IN A NOISELESS EXPLOSION. HEAT WASHES OVER ME AND CHILLS ME AT THE SAME TIME.

AND WHEN IT'S OVER...




SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT. AND SHE WON'T REMEMBER ANY OF IT, WHICH IS PROBABLY BEST.

I HAD TO WAIT FOR IT TO MANIFEST AND THEN BE CLOSE ENOUGH FOR IT TO HEAR THE EXORCISM.

YOU... EXORCISED HER--?

FOR GOOD. WITH ANY LUCK, DOOM TAUGHT ME HOW.

ONE OF THOSE THINGS I KNEW I'D NEED TO KNOW.



I FIGURED, WHY WAKE UP THE TEAM WHEN I HAD IT IN HAND?

I THINK I'LL WALK HOME, IF THAT'S OKAY. SEEMS A NICE NIGHT FOR IT.



A TOTALLY  
IMPULSIVE  
QUESTION FROM  
THE GUY WHO  
HAS TROUBLE  
DECIDING.

I DON'T  
KNOW WHAT...  
POSSESSED ME.

STILL, THE  
QUESTION  
HANGS THERE,  
AND THEN...



I'M AWASH  
WITH RELIEF,  
AND YET...



**X**

# NEXT

